

## Chenille at Cankdeska Cikana Community College Next Steps Project

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The Next Steps Project is the Cankdeska Cikana Community College's Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program, funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance. The Next Steps Project directors were traveling during early months of the project, and when they arrived at the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's office in Fort Yates, North Dakota, to ask for assistance with recruitment, they found an eager young woman patiently waiting in the office to meet them. That young woman was Chenille Condon. She had been notified about the new HPOG project and the date the Next Steps staff planned to visit, and she was waiting to find out how she could join the project, and how soon.

Chenille is an enrolled member of Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of Fort Yates, a married woman with four children. She always wanted to get a college diploma, and she acquired her General Educational Development (GED) certification in January 2011.

Chenille entered the Next Steps Project as a member of its initial cohort of Certified Nursing Assistant and Quality Service Provider trainees at the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe site in the spring of 2011. She worked hard throughout the program, juggling the training and being a full-time mom. Despite her current circumstances and despite being surrounded by poverty, Chenille knew she wanted more for her family. With the help of Next Steps, she realized the opportunity for a different life was there.

The opportunity to work in the field of nutrition became Chenille's goal. She realized that tribal communities are desperately in need of nutrition professionals due to high obesity and diabetes rates that surpass those of most other races in the United States. Chenille relocated and enrolled in the nutrition program at United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota. She has worked hard to earn good grades and stay in school in spite of traumatic life circumstances.

On May 29, 2012, Chenille gave birth to her fourth child. Just two days later, she went through a bronchoscopy, and then, on June 06, a biopsy that was supposed to take 20 minutes but turned into a nightmare. During the procedure the doctor cut her jugular vein, causing complications that led to a massive stroke which left Chenille paralyzed on her whole left side. She had to learn how to walk all over again and had no movement of her left arm at all. Chenille stayed in the hospital for almost 30 days, doing lots of therapy. Due to financial hardship, she and her family had to move back to Fort Yates from Bismarck.

Chenille was determined to get a college diploma, and her disability was not going to stop her. Though she was depressed, she had to keep positive and pray. Chenille believes that when you start something, you need to finish, and that is what she teaches her children and how she pushes herself. She requested and was granted permission to complete her nutrition degree online, and she completed the fall 2012 semester of online classes and got good grades even

without the full use of her left arm and hand. Chenille is currently taking her spring 2013 online classes, and she plans on moving back to Bismarck in the summer to complete the rest of her schooling on campus. She will graduate in the spring of 2014 with a degree in nutrition from United Tribes Technical College.

Chenille has had a roller coaster of a life for the past 10 months. Because she could not use her left arm, she could not care for her newborn son and had a family member taking care of him, seeing him only on weekend visits. Now she continues to be in a custody battle for her son as she carries on with her schooling. Chenille is very thankful for all the support the Next Steps Project has given her and all the mentors who have worked with her and become lifelong friends.

To know Chenille Condon as she has progressed through the Next Steps HPOG program is to know fortitude, wisdom, and courage personified. A person who knows her is humbled by the quiet and unrelenting heroism of this young Lakota woman. Chenille is one of a kind and deserves a lot of credit for not giving up. By overcoming the barriers in her way, not only does Chenille have a success story; she is a living miracle.